



**TESTIMONY
BART RUSSELL
CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF SMALL TOWNS (COST)
BEFORE THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 23, 2009**

SB-833, AN ACT INCREASING CERTAIN BOND AUTHORIZATIONS FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Regional Incentive Grants

Connecticut's small towns and cities support initiatives to encourage voluntary regional cooperation to provide programs to meet the needs of local residents and businesses in a more efficient, cost-effective manner. As Connecticut's small towns and cities struggle to do more with less, many communities are exploring new opportunities to share resources to meet these growing needs. Programs such as the Regional Incentive Performance Grant program have been very successful in encouraging regional projects. The state should continue to fund these programs and make them more flexible to encourage even greater regional cooperation. **We therefore support SB-833, which provides \$40 million for the Regional Incentive Grant program and \$10 million for regional purchases of equipment.**

Role of the Regional Planning Organizations

The role of regional planning organizations should be strengthened to enable them to act as a catalyst to help towns explore opportunities for regional programs and assist them in applying for grant programs. In addition, the RPO's could act as a mediator to resolve any implementation issues and to ensure that the towns stay on task in implementing the grant. RPO's should also develop best management practices and assist towns with negotiating and drafting shared services agreements to facilitate regional cooperation.